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principles which lie at the foundation of all art, — to an unceasing practice of the elementary studies, on which all accuracy depends, — and to the unfolding of the imagination and taste, by careful literary culture. Still we think, after the works of temporary interest have vanished from the face of the earth, there will be left many enduring memorials, on which genius, labor, and high poetry, are visibly stamped. It may be that an era of art is approaching, in which the graceful refinement, the elaborate finish, the delicate taste, fostered by the venerable institutions of Europe, shall be made to adorn the spirit of our republic, and the typified sentiment of American freedom.

ART. VIII. — *Slavery.*

An Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans called Africans. By MRS. CHILD, Author of the *Mother's Book*, &c., &c. Boston. 1831.

WE have placed the above title of a book by Mrs. Child, at the head of this article in order to express our regret that a writer capable of being so agreeable, and at the same time so useful, should have departed from that line of authorship in which she has justly acquired a high reputation. Our principal object in the article is to offer to our readers a brief and rapid outline of the state of slavery at different periods in the history of the world; and, in that way, to correct impressions upon the subject which are, we believe, in many cases, erroneous and ill-founded. We have been the more strongly induced to do this, from the high state of excitement which exists in England and our own country upon the subject, and which has been fomented by the press, by associations, and the various other modes of operating upon the public mind, that distinguish in so remarkable a manner the history of the present age.

It is not indeed surprising, that the subject of involuntary servitude should excite a deep interest in the public mind. While so many institutions for benevolent purposes are at work, and unparalleled efforts are making to enlighten, educate, and elevate mankind, it is hardly to be conceived that a

numerous class of human beings should be held in slavery by a people professing to be governed by the precepts of the Christian religion, without exciting the animadversion of philanthropists.

There is so glaring an absurdity in this condition of society, that the danger to be apprehended, when public attention is aroused to the subject, is, lest feeling should degenerate into passion, and action be dictated rather by impulse than by judgment.

No one can look forward to the future destinies of our own country, so far as they are connected with this subject, without misgivings and gloomy forebodings. But leaving this view of our subject for the present, we propose to inquire how far slavery prevailed among some of the principal nations of antiquity,—what was its state in Europe during the middle ages,—and finally, to trace the rise, progress, and present state of negro slavery, in England and her colonies, and in our own country.

It is certainly a curious fact, that so far as we can trace back the history of man, we discover the existence of slavery. One of the most obvious causes of this, lay in the almost incessant wars which were early carried on between tribes and nations, in which the prisoners taken upon one side and the other were either slain or reduced to slavery. Thus the latin word which we translate *slave*, indicates by its etymology that the captive, who was brought into bondage, had been preserved from death.

Among the Jews, slavery was not only tolerated, but authorized and regulated by the laws of Moses. The Mosaic institutions, however, were rather predicated upon the previous existence of slavery in the surrounding nations, than designed to establish it for the first time ; and the provisions of the Jewish law upon this subject, effected changes and modifications which must have greatly improved the condition of slaves among that peculiar people.

There were several modes by which the Hebrews might be brought into servitude. If any one was reduced to poverty, he might sell himself. A father might sell his children. Insolvent debtors might be delivered as slaves to their creditors. Thieves, who were unable to make restitution for the property stolen, were sold for the benefit of the sufferers. Prisoners of war were subjected to servitude ; and if a Hebrew captive

was redeemed by another Hebrew from a Gentile, he might be sold by his deliverer to another Israelite. At the return of the year of jubilee, all Jewish captives were set free. This, however, did not apply to foreign slaves held in bondage. Over these the master had entire control. He might sell them, judge them, and even punish them capitally, without any form of legal process. Thus the law of Moses provides, that "if a man smite his servant or his maid with a rod, and he die under his hand, he shall be surely punished; notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished, for he is his money." And this restriction is said, by learned writers, to have applied only to Hebrew slaves, and not to foreign captives who were owned by Jews. In general, if any one purchased a Hebrew slave, he could hold him only six years; but for the redemption or emancipation of foreign slaves there seems to have been no provision; and if a Hebrew captive, at the time of his being entitled to his freedom, declared his love for his master, and his unwillingness to go free, his master brought him before the judges, and then to the door-post of his own house, and bored his ear through with an awl, and he thereby became his servant forever.

There were various other provisions in the Mosaic laws upon the subject of slavery. Among other things, they declared the terms upon which a Hebrew, who had been sold, could redeem himself, or be redeemed by his friends, and his right to take with him his wife and children, when discharged from bondage; but it is unnecessary to repeat these provisions in order to show the character and extent of slavery among God's chosen people.

In Greece, slavery existed from the earliest period of her history, of which we have any knowledge. It was general there before the days of Homer. The various states of Greece had different codes of laws, but in them all the slaves were a majority of the people. The proportion of slaves to freemen probably varied in different states, and in the same state at different times. An historian states the proportion to have been, at one period, as 400 to 30. In Athens, another writer states, there were three slaves to one freeman; and at one time, in that state, when there were but 10,000 free citizens of an age to pay a capitation tax, there were 400,000 slaves, including women and children. In Sparta, the proportion of slaves was much greater than in Athens.

A trade in slaves was a legitimate branch of business ; and in Athens there was a regular market for carrying on this kind of commerce. Those who were bought and sold were either barbarians, or the descendants of conquered Greeks.

The condition and treatment of slaves varied in different states. In Sparta, they were exposed to the most wanton and unrelenting cruelty. They were called Helots, and were the descendants of Greeks who had been early conquered. The severities under which they suffered, seem at this day almost incredible. All the labor among that nation of warriors, both in the house and the field, was performed by slaves. They were a kind of public property, and subject to insult and abuse from every citizen in the state. Their dress was peculiar, distinguishing them from citizens ; and no office was too revolting or degrading to be imposed upon them at the will or caprice of their masters. They were not permitted to learn any liberal art, nor to partake in any exercise or duty which was considered manly or honorable. That they might not for a moment forget their condition, they were subjected, we are informed, to the lash every day, and were often compelled to drink to intoxication, in order to be exhibited as objects of disgust before the Spartan youth.

These slaves were so numerous as to be objects of fear to their masters, and measures, alike cowardly and cruel, were adopted from time to time, to diminish their numbers. It was common for the Spartan youth to arm themselves with daggers, and go into the country around the city, and waylay and murder the Helots whom they found abroad in the night-time. And if, at any time, a Helot indicated by his deportment a disposition to rise above his condition, he was despatched by a summary mode, and the state relieved of the danger. At one time, we are informed, some hundreds of the most intelligent Helots were massacred, after having been crowned with garlands in the mockery of triumph.

For any insult or injury, however cruel or gross, they were without any legal redress ; and while in some of the Grecian states, a slave upon being too roughly treated by his master, could insist upon being sold to another, the Helot of Sparta had not even this poor relief. We are in the habit of speaking and thinking of the period when Grecian liberty prevailed in the Grecian republics, as a golden age in the history of man. But while many of her free citizens were indeed among

the bravest, the noblest, and the wisest, that the world has ever seen, there was a vast population scattered through her cities and agricultural districts, more degraded, more oppressed, and more enslaved, than the blacks of the West-Indies or the Carolinas. The gallant and immortal band who fought and died for liberty at Thermopylæ, had been themselves the cruel and uncompromising task-masters of abject and degraded slaves at home.

When we turn to Rome, the picture of slavery is somewhat changed, but can hardly be said to be much improved, especially in the earlier part of her history. Even while claiming to be a free republic, — while her citizens challenged privileges and immunities which proud and independent freemen only could claim, slavery existed in Rome, and was recognized and regulated by her laws. After its first introduction, it was principally sustained and perpetuated by means of captives taken in war, by the sale of debtors who were unable to satisfy the claims of their creditors, and by the issue of the slaves themselves. The number of this class in the empire was, at some periods of the Roman history, truly astonishing. In the time of Claudius, while there were twenty millions of citizens and forty millions of provincials, there were sixty millions of slaves. In the time of Augustus, an African widow left four hundred slaves at her death. A freed-man left thirty-six hundred yokes of oxen, two hundred and fifty thousand smaller cattle, and four thousand one hundred and sixteen slaves. It is stated by Pliny, according to Gibbon, that he had known many persons who owned from ten to twenty thousand slaves. They were chiefly barbarians, taken in the wars which Rome was so constantly carrying on, and must have been purchased at a comparatively inconsiderable price.

The prices of slaves, however, varied according to their capacity of being useful, or able to minister to the pleasures of their masters. Some of them were taught the arts, some were tradesmen, and some of them physicians, and notaries or public writers. In the Justinian code, there was a scale or price current, regulating the value of slaves, whenever a price was to be judicially fixed upon that kind of property. A physician was estimated as worth about three times as much as a common servant.

The prices of slaves, as given by Blair, a recent writer upon this subject, varied from those fixed by the legal standard.

Thus a fool was sold for £161 9s. 2d. The cook of Apicius, so famous in the history of gourmands, was estimated at £772. Sabinus paid £817 5s. 10d. each for *learned* slaves ; and a distinguished actor was estimated, in one instance, at £1614 11s. 8d.

The control of masters over their slaves was, for a long time, absolute and complete, even to the inflicting of capital punishments without trial or appeal. In a later period of their history, the latter power was conferred upon the magistrates.

The laws, however, in regard to slaves, were always extremely severe ; and some of them would strike any one, at this day, as cruelly unjust and altogether unreasonable. Thus, if a master was murdered in his house, all his slaves under the same roof, or within hearing of the house, were condemned and punished as murderers. In one instance, recorded in history, four hundred slaves in one palace were executed for not preventing their master's murder. If a man was murdered on a journey, all the slaves who were with him were put to death, nor did it make any difference though their innocence was proved.

If a slave was cruelly treated by his master, he might, at some periods of the Roman history, insist upon being sold to another master. The process of manumitting slaves was easy, and frequently adopted. Many of the richest men in Rome were freed-men. But a freed-man had no right to civil or military honors, nor was he considered as worthy of a seat in the senate. The stain of ignoble birth was not obliterated until the third or fourth generation.

The condition of the slaves in Rome varied, as we have already stated, from time to time ; but slavery, in one form or another, existed and was recognized by law, till Rome herself fell a prey to the hordes of her invaders, and slavery assumed the form and character which it wore among the barbarians of Germany and the north of Europe.

Among the German nations, during the middle ages, slaves were extremely numerous. They consisted of captives taken in war, insolvent debtors sold for the payment of their debts, or persons who had sold themselves. It was not thought proper for a creditor to hold his debtor in bondage, and the insolvent, therefore, was sold to some other person than his creditor. These nations were, also, so extravagantly fond of gaming, that they were often willing to stake their liberty upon

the chance of a game, and to go into perpetual bondage, if the fortune of the play was against them.

In times of famine, also, people often sold themselves to obtain the means of support ; and during the most turbulent periods of the dark ages, most of the small landed proprietors were compelled to submit themselves as slaves to some neighboring powerful lord, in order to obtain protection from the rapacity of lawless marauders. Many voluntarily submitted themselves as slaves and vassals of monasteries and the church, partly for protection, and partly from motives of superstition and reverence for the papal institutions. In these several ways, the slaves became by far the most numerous class in the community, and about A. D. 1000, whole towns were filled with them.

In the early stages of German history, after the fall of the Roman empire, slaves were literally destitute of every civil right or privilege. They belonged to their masters and could be sold like any other property, at his pleasure. If a master killed his slave the act was not punishable as an offence, because the slave was not considered as a member of political society. Slaves were not permitted to marry, even for some centuries after these nations were converted to Christianity. They were distinguished by their dress, and while it was common for freemen to wear their hair long, slaves were obliged to have their heads shaved. They were not admitted as witnesses in court against freemen.

They were principally employed in the labors of husbandry, and were early called, from "*villa*," signifying among other things a *farm*, "*villains*." They were lodged *en masse* in their master's castle, and when we consider how destitute of comfort at that day were even the palaces of kings, it must be apparent that the slaves were in but few, if in any respects, in a better condition than the cattle that are owned and fed upon our farms at this day.

This may be considered as the earliest stage of slavery among the feudal nations in Europe. From being thus bought, sold, fed and lodged like beasts of burden, they at length were permitted to occupy cottages, with some small portions of land connected therewith, upon which they were allowed to labor during the intervals of their employment in their master's service. They thus became so far connected with the soil upon which they labored, that their master's ceased

to have a right to sell them separate from it. But nevertheless they passed with the soil, whenever it was sold, as a part of the inheritance, nor could they, at this stage of their history, acquire or hold any property as their own.

The next step in the progress of the liberty of the working classes, was the giving to the occupants of the land an interest in its products, and permitting them to pay a fixed sum annually as rent for the same to the lord of the manor. All these stages were passed through, before the laboring classes in England, or on the continent, were permitted to acquire any right or interest as freeholders in the soil. As lately as the twelfth century a master could punish his slave capitally, without any trial; and even after that time the life of a slave was atoned for by a trifling fine. Charlemagne increased the fine for murdering a slave belonging to the crown lands, from forty-five to one hundred *solidi*. If any one put another's slave to torture, so that he died, he was by law obliged to pay to the owner of the murdered slave, two slaves in his stead, if such slave was innocent of the offence for which he underwent torture.

While Venice was growing rich from the commerce of the East, she purchased Asiatic luxuries by supplying the slave markets of the Saracens with slaves, whom the Venetians pretended to purchase of their heathen neighbors,—it being then, as since, thought to be a sufficient reason for making a man a slave, that he was a heathen. This traffic continued till the close of the eleventh century.

It will be remembered, that the slaves of Germany and the rest of Europe were not guilty of being of a darker hue than their masters. They were often either of the same flesh and blood with their lordly tyrants, or the descendants of the more polished and effeminate nations of the south of Europe, whom their masters had conquered. And many a lord and noble of this day, could he trace his pedigree back to this early period, would doubtless find among his ancestors more than one object slave of a feudal master.

The Saxons who conquered England and ruled over it for so many years, were a German nation, with German customs and institutions, and like their countrymen, they recognized the lawfulness of slavery. It is stated by Hume that the slaves constituted the greater portion of the population of England during the Saxon government. The wars between the differ-

ent parts of the kingdom, while it was a heptarchy, and the invasions and wars of the Danes, may have contributed to this multiplication of their numbers.

The conquest of England by the Normans took place in 1066, and we are told by historians that before this time it was common for the English to sell their own children as slaves to the Irish, and that this traffic continued until the reign of Henry II., when the Irish, in a national synod, agreed to emancipate their English slaves. We may here quote from a note in the twenty-fourth number of the *London Quarterly Review*, the language of William of Malmsbury, a writer of that day, upon this subject. "Directly opposite the Irish coast, there is a sea-port town called Bristol, the inhabitants of which frequently sail into Ireland to sell their people, whom they had bought up throughout all England. There you might see, with grief, fastened together by ropes, whole rows of wretched beings of both sexes, of elegant forms and in the very bloom of youth, a sight sufficient to excite pity even in barbarians, daily offered for sale to the first purchaser. Accursed deed! Infamous disgrace! That men, acting in a manner which brutal instinct alone would have forbidden, should sell into slavery their relations, nay, even their own offspring."

The reader cannot fail to remark the striking resemblance that existed between the commerce and traffic pursued by this "sea-port town," in the twelfth and afterwards in the eighteenth century, when the African slave trade had taken the place of the English.

The Feudal system was introduced into England by William the Conqueror, and in the course of a few years prevailed through the kingdom. The Saxons were treated with great indignity by their conquerors, and the condition of the slaves was in no respect mitigated.

Whoever has read (and who has not?) the inimitable tale of Walter Scott, "*Ivanhoe*," will recall, at once, the description of the garb and appearance of one of the Saxon slaves, which is given in the first chapter of that work. Among other marks which distinguished his condition was a brass ring, or collar, like the collars now worn by dogs, soldered fast about his neck, upon which were inscribed his name and the name of his *owner*. This refers to the condition of English society at the close of the twelfth century, and serves better than any general description could do, to indicate the depth of degradation, and the

severity of the bondage to which the lower classes were then reduced.

Traces of this state of society are now discernible in many of the provisions of the English law, — especially in relation to the *tenures* by which estates are there held ; but it cannot be necessary for our present purpose even to attempt a sketch or outline of the changes, which successively took place before that state of English freedom was attained, of which her writers so often boast.

By the middle of the fourteenth century the slaves, or villains of England, were become free laborers, and the distinction of names was virtually abolished by the time of Elizabeth, although until then, that condition called *predial servitude* existed in England.

Various causes conspired to bring about these changes in the condition of the people of that country, and among these it is said that the preaching of Wickliffe was powerfully felt. So true is it, that “ where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”

Another cause of these changes was, that the masters found by experience, as we believe all slave-holders must, that it was more profitable to receive rents for their lands in money, than to require the labor of their tenants in return for the expense of supporting them as slaves. It was first in towns and among artisans and manufacturers, that this change in the mode of paying rent for houses and lands was adopted, and it eventually became universal through the kingdom.

In some parts of Europe slavery disappeared earlier and in others later, than in England. In Italy it had declined by the eleventh or twelfth century, and in the fifteenth, had disappeared altogether. In many of the states of Germany, the peasantry had gained their freedom before the end of the thirteenth century. In France the slaves upon the royal domains were liberated by a decree of Lewis X., in 1315. But servitude was not wholly discontinued there until the revolution of 1793. Until that time the peasantry in some parts of the kingdom were taxed at pleasure by the lord of the manor on which they resided. In other places, the peasantry could not leave their habitations without being liable to be pursued and taken by their lords like fugitive slaves ; while in some districts the lord succeeded upon the death of his vassal to his whole estate in exclusion of his kindred. Dreadful as was the storm of that

revolution, it swept away these relics of a barbarous age, and left a heathen soil for the growth of civil liberty.

In Prussia villanage was not abolished till 1739. In Bohemia and Moravia it was abolished in 1783, and in Baden in 1785. It still continues in some portions of Russia in its most offensive form, though we are not prepared, nor is it necessary for our purpose, to show the number or condition of the serfs in that empire. We now pass over the other portions of Europe to reach the principal subject of our proposed inquiry, viz., the rise and present state of negro slavery. *

Various periods are mentioned by writers as the commencement of the African slave trade. The time mentioned by Mrs. Child is 1442. In 1503 the trade between Africa and the new world commenced. In that year a few negroes were taken by the Portuguese and carried to America, and sold to the Spaniards. The rapacity and horrid barbarities of the Spaniards towards the natives of the new world fill a dark page in the history of human cruelty and suffering.

In 1511, Ferdinand, then king of Spain, was induced to permit a large number of slaves to be imported into his colonies. This measure was, however, opposed by his prime minister, Cardinal Ximenes. When Charles V. came to the throne of Spain in 1516, he granted to a Flemish favorite an exclusive privilege of importing into the Spanish West-India islands four thousand slaves annually. This right the favorite sold for the sum of twenty-five thousand ducats to some Genoese merchants,

* The details of the manner in which personal slavery was abolished in Europe are not very accurately known. The change was effected by a gradual and in some cases obscure process, which seems to have left but few traces in the history of the times. Mr. Sismondi, of Geneva, published about two years ago an interesting pamphlet, which was reprinted entire in the Philadelphia National Gazette, and which gives some account of the abolition of villanage in Tuscany. He states that it was effected by substituting what the French call the *métairie* system, or a division of the produce between the landlord and the cultivator. A tract of land was assigned to the villain who cultivated it himself, and gave the owner half the produce as rent, reserving the other half for himself. The produce was so much greater on this system than on that of personal slavery, that the owner's profits were increased instead of being diminished. Sismondi thinks that the same principle might be applied in the United States, and that the blacks might be raised in this way to a condition of local and political equality with the whites, with the same ease with which the serfs were emancipated in Europe. We had the pleasure to hear, not long since, from an intelligent and philanthropic planter to whom we had communicated the work of Mr. Sismondi that he had commenced an experiment of this kind with some of his own slaves. Without being very sanguine in regard to its success, we look forward with a good deal of curiosity and interest to the result. — Ed.

who first established a regular and systematic trade in slaves between Africa and America. The number of slaves imported from Africa since that period has been estimated by writers in whose means of judging we have great confidence, to exceed forty millions, of whom from fifteen to twenty per cent. have died on their passage across the Atlantic.

It is not our design to harrow up the feelings by any picture of the horrors of the slave trade, especially of that most revolting of all its horrors the "middle passage," as it is called, from Africa to the port of landing. If the accounts and descriptions which are given as authentic, are not exaggerated an hundred fold, there is no language adequate to do justice to the atrocity of the traffic.

But revolting as it is, it was formerly licensed by the Spanish, French and English governments, and pursued by them and other maritime nations as a legitimate business. So far were those who were engaged in the business, from feeling any misgiving about it or attempting concealment, that it does not seem for centuries to have occurred to any one that it was not an honest, proper and reputable traffic. Nations were eager to monopolize and engross the business of supplying the slave markets of christian countries, and companies were chartered, forts and factories established, and treaties made for the regulation of the trade, long after the commencement of the last century.

It has been and still is common for English travellers to censure the United States in no measured terms, for the existence of the scourge of slavery in our country. However just these remarks may be, they come, to say the least, with an ill grace from citizens of that country which not only, as we shall see, fastened this very evil upon us, but has done more to increase and perpetuate slavery in the world than any, we had almost said every, other nation on the globe.

In 1562, the English began to supply the island of Hispaniola with slaves. The first of these were stolen on the coast of Africa, and Sir John Hawkins, who had been engaged in the enterprise, was sent in one of the Queen's ships, called the *Jesus*, in company with the ships *Solomon* and *Tiger*, to seize the blacks upon the Guinea coast.

In the time of James I., a royal charter was granted to a company of merchants in London, with peculiar privileges to carry on this business. In the reign of Charles I., another

similar company was chartered, and a third was formed in the time of Charles II. ; but this latter was opposed by the merchants generally, because "all had a natural right to engage in the business." In 1697, the trade was laid open to all English subjects. In 1689, a solemn convention was formed between England and Spain, by which the former acquired the exclusive right of supplying Jamaica with slaves ; and at the peace of Utrecht, in 1713, an article was inserted in the treaty, whereby the exclusive right of England to supply the Spanish colonies in America with slaves, to the number of four thousand eight hundred annually, for a certain term, was recognized and guaranteed.

England, at last, by treaty and the enterprise of her slave merchants, secured to herself two thirds of all the trade. She became the carrier of the Christian world, and had from one hundred and fifty to two hundred ships engaged in the business. Before the year 1797, the average number of slaves transported by her traders, exceeded forty thousand by the year ; and after that time, till the passage of the abolition act, they exceeded fifty-seven thousand annually. In one year they are said to have exceeded seventy-four thousand.

The Dutch, in the meantime, were engaged in the business, and are said to have taken about ten thousand slaves a year from the slave coast. The enormities of this abominable traffic began at last to arouse the attention of the humane in England ; but the first impulse to the cause of abolition was given, we believe, from America.

The Quakers, as a class, were always decidedly opposed to the trade, and in 1783 petitioned parliament to abolish it. This was the first petition upon the subject ever offered to that body, and found a cordial advocate and supporter in Mr. Wilberforce, who then sat in parliament as a member from Yorkshire. It is hardly necessary to add, that the prayer of the petition was rejected.

Previously to this time, in 1772, a decision was had in the King's Bench upon the subject of slavery, which had an important influence upon the public mind. This was in the case of James Somersett, who had been a slave in Virginia, and had been brought by his master to London, whence he was about to be sent to Jamaica for sale. The right of the master to hold him in England, as a slave, was called in question before Chief Justice Mansfield, who, after learned arguments

of counsel, decided that no man could be held in slavery in England. The celebrated Granville Sharpe acted on that occasion as the negro's advocate, and was afterwards very active in promoting the abolition of the slave trade.

But the most active agent in the cause of abolition, and one to whose efforts more is to be ascribed than to those of any other person, was Thomas Clarkson, who literally spent his life in the work.

In 1787, an association was formed in England for the suppression of this trade; and in the year following, Mr. Pitt made his first motion in parliament to take the subject into consideration. From that time till its final abolition by act of parliament in 1807, the subject was almost constantly before that body.

The obstacles which the friends of the measure had to encounter, from time to time, were most disheartening, and at this day seem almost incredible. Although the propositions to abolish the trade were urged and sustained by all the eloquence and zeal of the first statesmen and orators in the land, they were defeated by the intrigues of those who were interested in the trade, till the friends of humanity almost despaired of success. Among the members of parliament who were actively engaged in this work, were Pitt, Fox, Sheridan, Burke, Grey, and above all, the fearless and indefatigable Wilberforce.

It shows how deeply rooted was the slave trade in Great Britain, that it was able to stand so long against the combined attacks of such men as we have named, and one of them the powerful, and popular, prime minister of the kingdom. Pitt did not live to see the accomplishment of his desires upon this subject. He died in 1806. But in the same year, during the ministry of Mr. Fox and Lord Grenville, a bill was brought into parliament for abolishing the slave trade; and upon a motion made by Mr. Fox, in the House of Commons, the proposition was carried by a vote of one hundred and fourteen against fifteen, on the 10th of June, 1806; and a similar motion was carried in the House of Lords, on the 25th of the same month. It was not, however, until February 5th, 1807, that the famous abolition act was passed, by which the slave trade, so far as the English colonies were concerned, was to cease after the first day of March, 1808. This bill received the sanction of the king, although it was understood that he and all the royal family, except the Duke of Gloucester, were opposed to it.

The trade, however, was still prosecuted, even by Englishmen, under the Spanish, French, and Portuguese flags. Through the influence of the English government, Portugal, in 1815, "brought her humanity to market," and for an agreed price engaged to abolish the trade. In 1817, Spain, by treaty, agreed to abolish the trade after 1820. France made a stipulation for its immediate abolition in 1815.

In 1818, the Netherlands came into a similar arrangement. Sweden had done this as early as 1813. Denmark had the honor of being in advance even of England, in this measure; for, in 1792, an ordinance was passed, making it unlawful for any Danish subject to be engaged in the trade after 1804. Brazil, in 1826, by treaty, engaged to abolish the trade after the year 1830.

Notwithstanding these efforts on the part of the English government, which have been seconded and sustained by that of the United States, and the apparent co-operation of the principal European nations, there is every reason to believe that the slave trade is still prosecuted to a very considerable extent. A writer in *Blackwood's Magazine* for November, 1833, states, that in 1830, two hundred thousand slaves were brought from Africa, and the number was increasing. The trade is pursued by the merchants of Cadiz, the Havana, Bahia, and Rio Janeiro; and rumor, true or false, has assigned to the English settlement of Sierra Leone an agency in this business, which is hardly to be credited.

The slave trade is indeed unlawful, and by the laws of many nations is made piracy, yet such is the cupidity of man, that, notwithstanding the danger they incur and the odium they encounter, thousands are found ready to engage in it.

Great Britain has of late years, however, pursued the abolition of the trade with a consistency and zeal beyond all praise, and her efforts have atoned, so far as atonement can be made, for her former zeal and enterprise in prosecuting the traffic. In May, 1833, Mr. Stanley brought forward a plan to abolish slavery in the British colonies. This, though violently resisted, has been substantially adopted, and there is little doubt left that in a few years negro slavery will be altogether discontinued in those colonies. No man can contemplate this event without perceiving at once the influence it will exert over the southern portion of the United States.

We had intended to allude more particularly to the revolution in Hayti, which brought into existence that anomaly in the

western world, a black empire, and to its influence upon the question of slavery in America; but our limits will not admit of the examination, and we pass to negro slavery as it has existed and still exists in the United States.

We have already alluded to the reproaches which foreigners heap upon our national character on account of the existence of this stain upon it. But the origin and cause of the evil may be traced to the state of colonial dependence in which our fathers were placed, and the inflexible determination of the mother country to plant and perpetuate slavery amongst them. This circumstance, it will be recollected, is alluded to in strong and pointed terms in the Declaration of American Independence. In the original draft of that instrument, much stronger language was employed, which the history of the slave question would seem to have fully justified.

Slavery once existed throughout the colonies. The first negro slaves were brought into Virginia by a Dutch ship, and landed at James-town in the year 1620. In Maryland they were first introduced in 1671, when a colonial act was passed to encourage their importation. The same year they were introduced into the Carolinas by a company of emigrants from Barbadoes. A few American merchants engaged in the trade, but by far the greatest proportion of the slaves that were brought into the colonies, were imported by English merchants. The trade never was popular here, and many of the colonies early endeavored to prevent the introduction of slaves among them, but were restrained in their efforts by the positive instructions of the crown. Thus, in 1761 Governor Wentworth of New Hampshire was directed not to assent to any law laying an impost upon negroes imported into that province. The mother country, in fact, never did any thing to restrain or limit this trade in her American colonies. In 1772 Virginia petitioned the British government to adopt some measures for the purpose, but though the petition was received, no answer to it was ever given. Many of the colonies, however, took measures to discourage the trade. Public sentiment was, we believe, hostile to it through the country. In 1699 Virginia laid duties upon imported slaves, and from time to time passed other acts tending to check the trade, until 1778, when the further importation of slaves was expressly prohibited by that state. Pennsylvania, as early as 1728, imposed duties upon imported slaves, and if our time and space permitted us to go

into the examination, we believe it might be shown that the laws of the other colonies promoted the suppression, or tended to the discouragement of the traffic in slaves. In New-England, certainly, the people were uniformly and decidedly opposed to the trade. In all the provinces north of the Susquehannah the condition of those who were slaves had little of the character of negro slavery, as it had any where else existed. They generally worked no harder than the white laborers, and were well fed, well clothed, and kindly treated. In Massachusetts this was peculiarly the case. Slavery had few terrors here to those who were the subjects of it. Public sentiment was always opposed to it. The Pilgrims, as it were by inspiration, and at a single effort, founded institutions which, by diffusing knowledge and a spirit of free discussion through the community, presented a barrier against slavery in every form, which no power has been able to surmount. Though there were slaves here from the first settlement of the state, and though the trade was open for the citizens, few, comparatively engaged in it.

When Governor Winthrop arrived here in 1630, he found negro slaves in the family of Mr. Maverick, a wealthy and hospitable gentleman who resided upon one of the islands in Boston harbor.

The first settlers in Massachusetts, as is well known, in establishing a system of civil polity, had a great regard to the laws and institutions of Moses. Thus, in 1641 it was enacted that there never should be any bond slavery, villanage or captivity amongst us, "unless it be lawful captives taken in just wars, or such as willingly sell themselves, or are sold unto us; and such shall have the liberties and Christian usage which the law of God, established in Israel concerning such persons, doth morally require." There was also existing at that time a law for disposing of insolvent debtors, at service, for the payment of their debts, with the restriction, that they "should not be sold to any but of the English nation." In 1673 a writer in speaking of the people of Boston says, they "are well accommodated with servants, — of these some are English and some negroes."

There were also, about that time, a few Indian slaves. During the war with Philip, which began in 1675, many of the Indians who had been considered as civilized and in friendly alliance with the English, joined Philip and were held by the colonists in the light of rebels. When these were taken in

arms they were either put to death, or sold into slavery. In 1712, however, a law was made against importing any Indians into the colony, unless the importer gave bonds to the secretary to export them again within the term of one month.

In 1703 a law was made to prevent manumitting slaves unless their masters gave bonds to save the towns where they dwelt, from charges on their account, and in the same year a law was passed to prevent Indians, mulatto and negro servants and slaves from being absent from the families to which they belonged after nine o'clock at night, "unless upon some errand for their respective masters or owners." Two years after this a law was made whereby, "if a mulatto or negro shall presume to strike any person of the English or other Christian nation," he should be whipped "at the discretion of the justices" before whom he should be convicted.

We have alluded to these colonial enactments rather as a sample of the laws which, as our fathers seemed to consider, were required by the state of society that then existed, than as an historical detail of the laws of Massachusetts or any of the other colonies.

It is impossible to ascertain the precise number of slaves at different periods in our history. There were only two censuses taken in Massachusetts before the revolution, one in 1763, which was imperfect, and the other in 1776. They were most numerous about the year 1745, when they bore the proportion to the whites of about one to forty. In 1758 there were about 2700 black slaves in the province, of whom 1200 belonged to the county of Suffolk. The trade, though open to all, was, as we have said, pursued but by a few. Not more than three ships a year from Boston were engaged in it, and most of the slaves were sold in the West Indies or the southern provinces. Very few whole cargoes were brought to Boston, and no other port in Massachusetts was engaged in the trade. Dr. Belknap, who wrote in 1795, relates that one man, then living, remembered two or three cargoes being brought into Boston, and he himself remembered but one which was about thirty or forty years before that time.

While the colony and province were obliged to make laws regulating slavery, they were taking measures from time to time to restrain and abolish it so far as was in their power.

In 1649 "man stealing" was made a capital offence, in conformity with the law of Moses. Four years before that

time a Captain Smith had stolen and brought into the colony from the coast of Guinea, two negroes, and the subject coming before the legislature, they expressed their horror of man stealing, and ordered these negroes to be sent back to their own country at public charge, "and a letter with them of the indignation of the Court thereabouts." This they did, as is stated in an act passed by them upon the subject, "to prescribe such timely redress for what is past and such a law for the future, as may sufficiently deter all others belonging to us to have to do in such vile and most odious courses, justly abhorred of all good and just men."

In 1701, the representatives of Boston were requested by that town to take measures to put a stop to negro slavery. This instruction coming as it did from that part of the province which was chiefly interested in the trade, indicates the estimation in which it was then held in the community. In 1705, a heavy duty was imposed upon slaves imported, and a drawback given to such as were exported within a year after having been landed. Of the condition of these slaves, we have already spoken. There were generally not more than two in a family, and in many families none. Their children were considered rather as an incumbrance, than a source of profit or wealth, and were given away like the young of some domesticated animals. Sabbath was always a day of rest to them; and when at work they labored no harder than white men, and were, in every respect, as well fed as other laborers. And when at last they were all emancipated, many of them voluntarily continued at service in their master's families as long as they lived.

As early as 1710, there were distinguished men in the colony who began to discuss, in public, the lawfulness and morality of the slave trade. Chief Justice Sewall was of the number. The Quakers in this and other colonies were always zealously opposed to it. Anthony Benezet, of Philadelphia, wrote against it, and his writings were republished in England, and had a decided influence in awakening public attention there, even before any one had openly entered the field of discussion.

When the colonies began to discuss their own political rights, this feeling of opposition to the slave trade gained strength, and as early as 1767 an attempt was made to pass a law in Massachusetts, "to prevent the unnatural and unwarrantable custom of enslaving mankind, and the importation of slaves

into the province." In 1773, another attempt was made to put a stop to this trade, and a bill passed the two Houses in 1774, to prevent the importation of slaves, which Governor Hutchinson refused to sign, because, as he said, his instructions forbade it. General Gage, when he came into office, refused his assent, also, to a similar bill, and pleaded his instructions as the reason; so that no law for the suppression of the trade was ever passed, while the province remained subject to the crown.

There were, however, in the meantime, judicial decisions, which, like the case of *Somerset*, in England, were found far in advance of the tardy action of the legislature. In 1769, a suit was brought by James, a negro, to recover his freedom, against a wealthy gentleman by the name of Lechmere. Sewall, who was afterwards attorney-general of the province, was counsel for the plaintiff, and Dana, afterwards chief justice of the supreme court, was the defendant's counsel. The suit terminated in 1769, in favor of the negro; and thus was settled a question similar to the one determined by Lord Mansfield, in *Somerset's* case, and more than two years earlier than the decision of that celebrated case. Other suits followed in other counties, and in most, if not all of them, decisions were in favor of the slaves. The ground upon which these decisions are said to have been made, was, that all persons resident in the province were, by its charter, as free as any of the king's subjects in England, and that there slavery was not recognized by law.

During the revolution, many towns voted that they would have no slaves. And it is related of a distinguished officer of the Massachusetts troops, (Colonel Bigelow, father of the late Hon. Timothy Bigelow,) that when solicited to dispose of a slave whom he owned, he replied, that "while fighting for liberty he would never be guilty of selling slaves." In 1777, a prize ship, with a cargo of slaves on board, was brought into Salem, and advertised to be sold; but the legislature, then in session, interposed, prevented the sale, and ordered the slaves to be set at liberty.

In 1780 the constitution of Massachusetts was adopted, the first clause of which declares, that "all men are born free and equal." It was, however, doubted whether this would operate to set at liberty those who had before been slaves. The constitution of New Hampshire, with a similar provision, was not

considered as emancipating any except those who were born after its adoption. This question was put at rest in Massachusetts by a trial which took place in the county of Worcester, in September, 1781.* The action was brought by a negro against his late master, for beating him. The defendant justified on the ground that the negro was his slave. Eminent counsel were engaged. Among others, Governor Strong, and the older Levi Lincoln, afterwards attorney-general of the United States. The result of the trial was, that the constitution was held to abrogate slavery altogether in Massachusetts. The trade, however, was not abolished until 1788, when an act of the legislature was passed, which prohibited any citizen, under very heavy penalties, from being engaged in what is called "that unrighteous commerce." Slavery, therefore, it will be perceived, was abolished in Massachusetts eight years before Mr. Pitt made his first motion upon the subject in the House of Commons, and twenty-seven years before the English act of abolition was passed.

The constitution of New Hampshire was adopted in 1783, and slavery was abolished by law, in Connecticut, in 1784. We might give, in detail, the periods at which slavery has been abolished in what are known as the "free labor states;" but it can serve no particular purpose, and we omit it.

The peace of 1783 found America independent, but impoverished, burdened with debt, and, what was far worse, burdened with a slave population, which had, in most of the states, been forced upon them by the British government.

From 1783 to 1788, little, if any thing, could be done upon this subject by the people unitedly, because of the discordant elements of which the confederacy consisted; and when the constitution was formed, it was found to be a cause of great embarrassment, which could only be removed by the spirit of concession and compromise. Representation and direct taxation were apportioned among the states, by a principle, which gave to the slave-holding states a numerical influence, somewhat proportioned to the numbers of their slaves.

Mrs. Child devotes a chapter in her book to this part of our subject, in which she attempts to show the injustice of the compromise above referred to, and the disastrous influence of slavery upon the politics of the country. We need not quote

* For the facts relative to this trial, we are indebted to J. Willard, Esq., of Boston.

her language, nor need we attempt to defend this compromise. But before any one condemns it altogether, he ought to call to mind that gulf of ruin towards which our country was hastening, and from which she was only saved by the adoption of the federal constitution.

By the provisions of the constitution, no prohibitory laws could be passed upon the subject of slavery before 1808. But so far as Congress could go they went, in restraining it, by a series of laws begun as early as 1794, and continued up to the time of the total abolition of the trade, which took effect on the first day of January, 1808, the earliest day when, by the constitution, the act could be enforced. Since that time laws have been passed from time to time, by Congress, more effectually to repress the trade. In 1820, it was made piracy to be engaged in it, and in 1824, a convention was formed between the United States and Great Britain to put a stop to the trade by a coöperation of their powers.

Still, slavery exists amongst us. By the census of 1830 there were upwards of two millions of slaves in the United States, and their number is constantly increasing. Of the States, twelve hold slaves, and twelve do not. Of the territories, slavery exists in Florida and Arkansas, as well as the District of Columbia, but is not admitted into Michigan. But when this baneful institution shall have spread over the wide and fertile regions beyond the Mississippi, to which it is accessible, while the slave population of the older states shall have gone on multiplying in their accustomed ratio, the imagination cannot reach the magnitude of the evil which hangs over our country.

No man can contemplate the existence and increase of slavery in the United States, without inquiring whether something may not be done to check it?

Even now the number of slaves is formidable, and when their numbers and their means of acquiring a knowledge of their condition, and of their physical power shall have increased to any considerable extent, can it be expected that they will remain slaves? It was the progress of the age, the growth and development of the human intellect, and not any legislative enactment, which raised the serfs and villains of England, and France, and Germany to the condition and capacity of free men. If the black population of our country is susceptible of intellectual cultivation, who can say that they will not *grow* free, and that, too, at no distant day?

Mrs. Child has devoted a chapter of her book to prove the natural equality of negroes and white men in intellect, and "that the present degraded condition of that unfortunate race is produced by artificial causes, not by the laws of nature." We have not room to follow her in her argument and her facts. But if the truth of this doctrine be admitted, where is the progress of their improvement to stop? Where intelligence is so widely diffused through the community, it is impossible to shut out the light of knowledge by any artificial barrier whatever. The most penal and severe laws may be enacted against teaching slaves to read and write, yet they are gregarious in their habits and propensities, and there may still be a communication of that which may arouse the attention and excite inquiry in minds that have never received the discipline of a school.

We feel that we are approaching almost dangerous ground. To a portion of our countrymen, slaves are their wealth, the possession and enjoyment of which, are guaranteed to them by the most solemn compacts. Whoever is ready forcibly to interfere with these rights, must be ready to give up and cancel the compact by which they are held. Men may talk about the dissolution of the union of these states, and may speculate ingeniously as to the probable consequences of such a catastrophe. And there may be ardent and chivalrous spirits who would snatch the slave from his bondage, though to reach him they would trample upon the prostrate necks of every slave-owner in the country. But before others are called upon to take a part in such measures, they should pause and consider well the consequences. The public mind at this moment is in a state of feverish excitement upon the subject. Every one feels that something must be done, and yet few are decided in their own minds as to what that something shall be.

Two schemes are now before the public, that of colonizing the blacks abroad, and that of immediately emancipating them here. As a means of introducing Christianity into Africa, and of preventing hereafter the prosecution of the slave trade, the colonization plan is entitled to great credit and confidence. But it is not considered we believe by any one as likely to effect the entire extinction of slavery at home. Mrs. Child has devoted one pretty long chapter to a discussion of the claims of the Colonization Society upon public patronage and confidence.

She prefers the course of those who are engaged in the scheme of emancipating the slaves, without removing them.

But if the design of the "abolitionists" be to emancipate the slaves at the South without the consent of the governments of those states, and thereby throw upon the community a population with all the vices of degraded ignorance, and none of the virtues of civilized life, it must be a scheme full of danger and peril.

That we must be rid of slavery at some day, seems to be the decided conviction of almost every honest mind. But when or how this is to be, God only knows. If in a struggle for this end the Union should be dissolved, it needs not the gift of prophecy to foresee that our country will be plunged into that gulf which, in the language of another, "is full at once of the fire and the blood of civil war, and of the thick darkness of general political disgrace, ignominy and ruin."

There is much error upon this as well as other subjects, to be corrected, before the public can act deliberately or wisely in relation to it. It is too common to associate with the slaveholder the character of the slave-merchant. And we regret to see the abolitionists of the day seizing upon the cruelties and abuses of power by a few slave-owners; in regard to their slaves, in order to excite odium against slave-holders as a class. This is alike unreasonable and unjust. Very many of them are deeply solicitous to free the country of this alarming evil. But no feasible means by which this is to be accomplished has yet been offered for their adoption. Such denunciations are no better than the anathemas of fanaticism, and ought to be discountenanced by every well-wisher of his country. The subject of slavery is one, in regard to which, more than almost any other, there are clouds and darkness upon the future destinies of these states. It is one upon which all think and feel more or less acutely, and it is, moreover, one upon which all may be called upon to act. It is, therefore, we repeat, with regret that we see intellects like that of Mrs. Child, and pens like hers, which may be otherwise so agreeably and beneficially employed, diverted from their legitimate spheres of action, and employed in urging on a cause so dangerous to the Union, domestic peace, and civil liberty, as the immediate emancipation of the slaves at the South.